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ABSTRACT

Ten selected emerging trends in the field of early childhood education are discussed in this conference address: (1) a reevaluation of the view that early childhood education is a panacea; (2) greater emphasis on planned continuity between kindergartens and the primary grades; (3) increased use of multi-age grouping; (4) need for parenthood education in the high school; (5) importance of parent involvement in the decision making and policy formation processes concerning the education of his child and the implementation of classroom programs; (6) wider acceptance of the structured or prepared environment in programs; (7) development of a quality day care environment based on careful research and evaluation, (8) importance of humanistic or affective education; (9) need for aesthetic education (music, dance, literature, dramatics) in the total education of the child; and (10) accountability of teachers to the consumer as well as to the school boards. (Author)

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EMERGING TRENDS AND ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Discussing emerging trends and issues in early childhood education is risky these days because so many of its components are being tried out, experimented with, and redesigned. As if that were not enough, a multidisciplinary approach is being pushed, with each discipline concerned that their imput is substantial. To further compound the issue, everyone from General Electric to Yale University is using available grant and research money to be sure that all young children get maximum exposure to the programs they deem necessary for their survival in the world of the 70's. Putting all this together could be a fulltime job, if indeed it could be done. There are many and often conflicting views and research results. But, this is what makes the field so vibrant and challenging, presumably why you are attending this conference. If you are "aware" at all, you will not be able to freeze in any position. I find this a very exciting time to be working in the field of early childhood education, and I know that all of you share my enthusiasm.

Now, what are some of these trends? First, some of the glamor of early childhood education as a panacea and instant prescriptive cure for all that leads to children's failure in the elementary schools seems to be rubbing off. We may well

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believe that we do not have a corner on intervention. Other age levels may be equally propitious. Even Dr. Jerome Kagan, an esteemed Harvard University child development specialist, has changed his position on this issue. He has seen that deficits in the extreme during infancy and toddlerhood can be made up during later years. His research was in a primitive and isolated Guatemalan village with children who were totally isolated from perceptual stimulation during infancy. They were kept in a dark hut with no interaction with any human other than the mother who fed the child on demand. After two years, the child emerged into the outside world very retarded motorically, emotionally and intellectually. Kagan tested 11 year olds who were products of this treatment and found them to be happy and effective human beings, even more impressive than Americans in a set of culture-free tests (Kagan, 1973). Does this break all the rules of child development?

Earl Ogletree of Chicago State University presented a paper at the 1974 AERA meetings on Human Development, Stages of Cognition, School Readiness, and Social Deprivation: A Rationale Based on Piaget and the New Theory of Bioplasmic Forces Developed in Russia and China. It is his theory that academic training before a child is maturationally ready will reduce his learning potential. Piaget has shown that a child shifts from preoperational to the concrete operational level of thinking at ages seven or eight. A child's intersensory development, both sight and hearing, are not fully

developed until around age eight. He offers the suggestion that a bioplasmic model could help us, a concept that all living matter is made up of an energy body and a physical body. During the child's first seven years, the child is most active, and a greater growth rate occurs. Energy level is high. The child concentrates on physical growth. Ogletree feels that after age seven or eight, energy is freed to carry on thought processes. His theory is being researched in China and Russia as well as here. It is an interesting one. Do any of you recognize Rudolph Steiner's writings and philosophy in this? The Waldorf schools carry on with some of these ideas. There is no doubt that we will be getting input about early learning from biochemistry, physiology, medicine and psychology during the coming decade. (Ogletree, 1974)

Second, I see emerging a greater planned continuity of experience in early childhood programs. Too long there has been a split between the kindergartens and the primary grades. Schools are seeing that curriculum needs to start from the lowest level of school entrance, not from first grade. The kindergarten is slowely becoming a part of the system and not an appendage all of by itself. Open classrooms of K-1 combinations are no longer a rarity. There are even some where four to six-year olds are in the same class in public schools.

But an even greater split has existed between programs for children prior to school entrance and those of the public schools

at either the kindergarten or first grade level. Take Head Start as an example. There is often no communication between those classes and the classroom teachers who get their graduates, even if Head Start is in the school system. Where it is not, there is virtually no cooperation or communication. The Office of Child Development is now awarding communities grants to help bridge this gap. Project Developmental Continuity aims to encourage communities to better mesh their school programs with the various types of programs children experience before school.

One approach has been called Preschool-School Linkages. This has the purpose of bringing parents and teaching staff in both Head Start and the primary grades together to agree to compatible educational approaches and a coordinated curriculum. An alternative approach is called Early Childhood Schools and puts Head Start program and primary elementary children together in the same building, thus facilitating interchange between faculty and children.

The approach is so logical that I would wonder why government funding is necessary for this. As the birth rate drops, classrooms will become available, and it is logical for Head Start children to be housed in the schools. Many people mistrust the public schools, but the schools possess many advantages, facilities, and resources that should be available to all children. Nor should Head Start children be the only ones involved. Cooperative nursery schools,

play groups, non-profit schools could be included as space is available and as new facilities are planned. Many communities are already doing this. Financial, legalistic, and supervisory administrative concerns are not insurmountable.

If all young children are housed together in the future, then there is no logical reason why there cannot be movement between these groups. This is a third emerging trend. Multi-age groups will be popular. Children will be working together with less emphasis on what age a child is. The child will be seen more as an individual. There will be more opportunity for children to learn from their peers. There is no question in my mind that this really works to the child's advantage. The chronological age is almost valueless except as an administrative device to keep children neatly in groups and to determine a rigid program for the mythical average child. I have been working along these lines in the Washington area with interesting results. Even when initial parent and teacher reluctance was great in nursery schools, everyone is now thrilled at what is happening and say they could never go back to the old way. A child's development is continuous and highly individual. It is not determined by his chronological age.

Fourth, I see parenting becoming a respectable academic discipline, especially in our high schools. Surely all human beings need to learn how to interact with children whether they eventually are parents or not. Parenting is important. Mountains of research prove the obvious. Yet few people know what the responsibilities

and opportunities are. Parenting education is an interdisciplinary one and must be based on a teen-ager's understanding and acceptance of himself. The high school often provides terminal education for many students. That is why we early childhood educators should press for this. We need to educate all young people to the concept that each child deserves the best. Planning for children deserves as much preparation and consideration as buying a pair of wheels.

Teenagers are a natural for this. The fields of psychology, sociology, nutrition, and social services appeal to them. Teenagers enjoy the practical aspects of working with children in real life situations. We are talking about field work experiences which must be an integral part of any parenting course.

The Exploring Childhood program funded by OCD and NIMH is presently being field tested throughout the United States. The Educational Development Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts is assuming leadership in this program. Students in high school work with young children while learning about child development and gaining a sense of their own identity during the full year course. EDC has developed unique materials and support services to make significant learning experiences for students, teachers, and the community as a whole. (EDC, 1974).

Closely related to parenting education is a fifth issue in early childhood: parent involvement. Parent involvement in

education is now taken for granted in many areas. In others, there is still reluctance and suspicion. Federal programs mandate involvement. States are picking up on this and even local boards are appointing or electing parent advisory boards to give them local citizen input. In a way this picks up on the consumer movement. Parents and their children have great stakes in what schools do for their children and they want to be in on some of the decisions. These decisions are too important to be left just to professionals. We in early childhood have always operated on the parent-teacher approach to a child, realizing how little time we really have with a child. We now realize how important the family is in the development of the child as a fully functional human being. More and more research points to the unique strengths of the family in educating their children. Children learn from all experiences and all people with whom they come in contact. Schools are not the only institutions that teach, nor do teachers have a monopoly on teaching the young.

Programs are moving from the simplistic notion of a parent as a support service to the children. The parent is also seen as a learner, learning how to become a better parent and thus enhance the development of his child. Parents are also seen as useful volunteers and aides in classrooms and centers, working with children, not cleaning up or acting as a maid. There has

been some concern that training parents to be paid aides may be more of an employment service than an educational one. No doubt this has happened in some cases. Teacher aides, usually parents, should be selected on criteria other than just financial need. Children deserve the best, and a well-trained parent aide is invaluable in working with small groups and individuals. Nor can we ignore the added bonus of her becoming more effective with her own children, and perhaps even in the neighborhood as a parent model.

The ultimate involvement is that of partnership taking part in decisions and policy matters. Parent involvement means commitment and a feeling of power about their lives. Leadership skills in parents can be a powerful force for planning and implementing the top level programs that meet the unique needs of children.

Teachers will need to acquire more and more skills in working in this partnership. Comfortable, workable arrangements need to be developed. Changes in attitudes are needed. Teachers will have to be responsive to parent's questions, concerns, and problems. In essence, teachers must see the growth and development of parents as a responsibility of theirs. Too long we have been concerned about growth and development of children. In reality, you cannot separate the two.

A sixth emerging development is a wider acceptance of the

structured or prepared environment in programs. Children learn from an interaction with materials as well as with people. Each child has highly individual needs and we must see that the child and the materials make that "match" as J. Mc V. Hunt says so succinctly. The professional must plan for and make available materials that the child needs. The child has to do something to materials in order to make sense of them. At the sensory motor stage the child is motorbound. During the preoperational stage, roughly two to seven years, he is sense-bound. The child sees only how things look to him and to him this is reality. His reasoning is minimal since direct perceptual relationships determine his thinking. Even at the concrete stage of thinking, thinking tends to be pictorial. He needs concrete objects to support his problem solving activities. Additionally, thinking is still bound to some extent to his emotional and affective life. Teachers will have to be more skilled in using child development research to set up the environment that is a "match" for each child. Nor should there be a sole occupation or overemphasis on things with which to interact. People are equally as important, especially the peer group. The Montessori approach provides the materials which meet the "match" but completely loses sigth of the importance of language interaction in a child's intellectual development. [illegible] to him, egocentric thought. He does not see things from the

perspective of another, and that is why social communication is so important. He has to learn that others do not see things as he does, nor do they always agree as to what is seen. Arguments and verbal conflicts are important in that they force a child to defend this own position. Thus, he clarifies his own conceptions. This leads to the development of more coherent and logical thought. This also leads to the internalization of his own experiences or actions on objects. Action always precedes communication. Schools cannot stress quietness if children are to learn.

As a seventh issue, consider day care, which is almost an emotional issue today. While day care may be a way of life for tens of thousands of children, we need to face up to the fact that there is more we do not know about its effect on children long term than what we do know. Caution is advised. Quality day care is what makes the difference, but quality is in short supply. Parents are very naive about what constitutes day care. I have been in some places where I would not put a dog, much less a child. Yet, parents do not know what quality care is. The appearance of a mod or splashy environment, lots of gimmicks, teachers with degrees (usually never stated as in what), the latest toys that the industry is pushing (plastic hot rods being the current obsession) closeness to home or work or slick brochures with many promises - none of these are adequate criteria for selection of a quality environment. State laws are presently

concerned minimally with light, heat, and fire exits. Many laws are not even enforced. Inspections are rare. Anyplace is better than the street seems to be the slogan of many communities. There is still a debate in many states as to whether day care is education or social service. Clearly it is both. States are just now facing up to the fact that there has to be clear direction by the state in bringing together all services for children without the departmental divisions and jealousies that we see all too often. Governor Winfield Dunn of Tennessee signed the Child Development Act of 1974 in his state this year. It is a model bill creating an Office of Child Development under the Governor's Office to coordinate all state services for children under six and to develop a process whereby state services for children ages 6 to 18 can eventually be coordinated. By 1980, all states should have some such law on the books and we need to make sure that this is done.

Drs. Caldwell, Wright, Honig, and Tannenbaum found no significant differences between their day care and home-reared groups of infants and the toddlers who entered care in the first year of life or early in the second. The study focused on a number of variables: affiliation, assurance, absence of hostility, permissiveness, dependence, happiness, and emotionality, all supposedly reflecting the strength of the mother-child attachment. (Caldwell, 1970)

Mary C. Blehar in a doctoral study at Johns Hopkins University, was interested in older children who were at home with

their mothers either two or three years before entering day care. What was the effect of repeated daily separation on qualitative aspects of established attachment relationships? After 5 months in day care, 20 children aged two and three showed more signs of anxiety and a greater fear of strangers than a matched group reared at home. During separation, day care children cried more, showed more oral behavior and avoidance of a stranger. Upon reunion with the mother they exhibited more avoidant and hesitant behavior.

But there were important age differences. The 40-month-old children showed more distress than did the 30-month-olds. In home-reared groups the opposite was found. A lot of unanswered questions remain. Why do children who have been exposed to more adults affiliate less easily with strangers? Does the quality of care count? Does quality mean consistent, highly individualized attachments? How can a day care center provide this when personnel seems to change so often? In Blehar's study, resistant and avoidance behavior of children was interpreted as indicative of qualitative disturbances in attachment. Absence of proximity seeking is interpreted to reflect a reaction against ambivalence and anxiety, not a weak attachment. Is family day care or part-time group care better than full-time for the young child? We should be getting more answers so as not to endanger the children who need these services (Blehar, 1974).

An eight emerging issue is that of the importance of humanistic or effective education. The 60's showed a total preoccupation with a child's cognitive development, and there were many reasons for this as you all know. I see the 70's as recognizing this error and trying to do something about it. Values, feelings, personal growth, the full life, even the rather forgotten idea of the happy life should be objective of school experience. I have been seeing some pretty grim early childhood centers in the last couple of years. The children never smile or look happy, nor do the teachers. We need to do some research on this, perhaps pay as much attention to a show of feelings as we do on-task behavior. I keep hoping that funding will spawn some giants in the effective field during the 70's. David McClelland's studies of need for achievement motivation is a big step in this direction. The Philadelphia affective curriculum has been developed and written about by Terry Borten in his Reach, Touch and Teach. (Borten, 1970) Ralph Ojemann's curriculum materials, developed over many years at the University of Iowa, center around a teaching program in Human Behavior and Mental Health for all elementary grades, including the kindergarten. (Ojemann, 1967)

Of special interest to early childhood people is child psychologist Harold Bessell's and educator Uvalda Palomares'

Methods in Human Development Program which includes one volume, Activity Guide for Pre-School and Kindergarten and an accompanying theory manual, Methods in Human Development. This is a recent preventive mental health program designed to facilitate growth in the affective domain by allowing children to become constructively involved in the development of their own personal awareness, self-confidence, and understanding of interpersonal relationships. The focus is to enable students to meet life's challenges of their level, including academic endeavor. (Bessell, Palomares, 1972)

One of the most eclectic approaches is that used by Dr. George Brown of the University of California at Santa Barbara, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Esalen Institute. He uses many different approaches, especially Gestalt theory. He encourages teachers to devise their own techniques to integrate academic and affective learning. In all of these studies, feelings, interpretation of values, and interpersonal relationships are dealt with in explicit ways, quite unlike the vagueness and generality usually associated with this facet of education up to this time. As you know, there is also a taxonomy of objectives in the affective domain today (Eiss, Harbeck, 1969).

But humanistic education also leans heavily on aesthetic education which has always been important to the traditional

nursery school. However, this aesthetic is being ignored today in many of our kindergarten classrooms. I can take you to schoolrooms in northern Virginia and Maryland where the aesthetic is ignored as there is no time for it. This is a big and burning issue, issue number nine. Teachers blame principals and principals blame administrators who blame parents for the push for cognitive dominance. All else are frills. Teachers need to stand up and make known the importance of art in all forms; music, dance, literature and dramatics, in the total education of the child. Very little has been done in this area, and too many teachers have the old notion of arts ~~and~~ as crafts and music as singing and dramatics as puppet plays. They do not know the philosophy and psychology of aesthetic education. The aesthetic education program developed by CEMREL seems virtually unknown to most educators. Many years and government funding has gone into a curriculum built on behavioral objectives. There is a report The Development of a Learning Environment for Aesthetic Education which is an interim report on work done in a kindergarten (Richard, Madeja, 1970). The report centers around a curriculum to achieve optimum intellectual growth through the acquisition of motor, auditory, visual, cognitive, and verbal skills. Now available is The Bee Hive: The Arts in Early Education, 1974, by the same authors.

A couple of books have influenced my thinking to a great degree. The first is Geraldine Dimondstein's Exploring the Arts with Children. While this book is not specific to the early childhood years, the philosophy and implications should be read and studied by every person involved in working with young children. She takes the art forms of painting, sculpture, dance, and poetry and discusses each with relation to: (1) definition and description, (2) distinguishing characteristics, (3) experiential approach, (4) art elements. This approach allows the reader to view the arts as a unity and to see what makes them special. Her approach is conceptual, not prescriptive. Each form has basic concepts from which you could generate learning experiences. It is not a methods book, but an attitude and approach, which the author states in the preface as a book "which attaches great importance to teaching the arts but is also concerned with developing children's aesthetic sensibility." (Dimondstein, 1974). Read it. I predict it may be one of the most significant books you have read this year.

Another provocative volume which deals with this whole issue is Elliot W. Eisner's Educating Artistic Vision. Dr. Eisner of Stanford University, has labored over a decade in art education, trying to understand why the arts are not prominent in the schools and why dichotomies have been established

between the work of the head and the work of the hand. He states so well in the preface that an education program that neglects the qualitative aspects of intelligence, that sidesteps the metaphorical and affective side of life, is only half an education at best (Eisner, 1972). He thinks that this leads to men who lack insight. His book is based on curriculum levels, and tries to translate theoretical ideas about artistic learning into practice for the average elementary school teacher. He invented expressive objectives for this purpose. These objectives complement the traditional behavioral or instructional objectives which are now an accepted way of life in most programs. An expressive objective describes an encounter a student is to have. From this encounter positive things should happen. The student uses his ideas imaginatively, not specifically as is the case with a behavioral objective. He sees children as using expressive skills to expand and explore ideas, images, and feelings. It is a book that is sensitively written. It will enrich your thinking as you plan for children to have these aesthetic experiences so necessary for their development as fully functioning human beings.

A tenth trend is all areas of education, and early childhood is no exception, is the area of accountability. Teachers are going to have to be more accountable to the consumer as well as to school boards. We have more and more knowledge

about how children learn, about process of interaction, about the wise use of materials, as well as more precise tools to determine our success in all areas of the development of the child. The use of behavioral or instructional objectives, despite limitations in their use as of this date, is a healthy step in this direction. Teachers and caregivers are forced to plan with more precision. We have to admit there has been a lot of sloppy work done in classrooms, too many people who had no rationale for what they were doing and who did the exact same thing day after day in spite of changing times and changing children, to say nothing of developing children. As of now the objectives are still being used too globally, in terms of large groups and total class. It will take time to retool some of the personnel and to make sure that new teachers have these skills that consider small groups and individuals.

Behavioral objectives mandate the use of task analysis even on an informal basis. Hierachical sequence becomes important, Educators. Knowledge of learning in motor skills, affective and cognitive development become equally important. Assessment becomes an ongoing daily process. Entry skills of children have to be known. Informal observation and game-like activities can accomplish this. I am not talking about standardized tests. Evaluation is also a daily process. I am talking

about evaluation and not testing. Evaluation and the immediate feedback necessary are built-in to behavioral objectives. This is a circular process which keeps student and professional fully informed as to the success of the plan, which then can be changed to the next step in the planned development or can be modified if the planner did not correctly assess the entry point of the student.

Behavioral objectives can be used in any model of anykind. It is a way of planning, not a philosophy. These objectives can fit into the open education or British Infant model. Contrary to many practices that you see in the United States, the British have a plan. In fact they plan more than the typical teacher does in many types of programs. They do not use the term behavioral objective and they may not use the exact form, but they do the thinking and planning required.

There are so many trends in this emerging field, and I have selected only ten realizing that one could go on for twice this long. I hope that you will tune in to some of these, be aware of them, read about them, visit programs that put some of the ideas into action, and perhaps use some of the ideas in your own interactions with children and their parents. Only as you internalize newer research findings and make them your own, and this does take time, will you become more effective in your relationships with children and their parents. By all of us working together we can make this the Year of the Child.

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